

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 EA-11 IO-14 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00

NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 ACDA-19 CIAE-00 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 RSC-01 SCI-06 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 PA-04

PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 AEC-11 AECE-00 SAJ-01 OMB-01 DRC-01

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2239

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION IAEA VIENNA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USLO PEKING

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 8358

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: TECH, IN

SUBJECT: REPORT INDIA IS WORKING ON A HYDROGEN DEVICE

REF: (A) STATE 134767 (B) BOMBAY 1407 (NOTAL); (C) NEW DELHI 7179

(NOTAL

1. JUNE 24 DELHI PAPERS CARRIED AN INDIAN WIRE SERVICE (UNI)
REPORT THAT ACCORDING TO INFORMED SOITMES THE ATOMIC ENERGY
DEPARTMENT IS CURRENTLY WORKING ON A THERMONUCLEAR EXPLOSIVE
DEVICE (HYDROGEN DEVICE) AS A FOLLOW-UP TO ITS MAY 18 TEST. THE
SOURCES POINTED OUT THAT IF CURRENT PROGRAMS PROCEED ACCORDING
TO SCHEDULE INDIA MAY ACHIEVE A MORE SPECTACULAR FEAT IN THE
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NEAR FUTURE BY EXPLODING A THERMONUCLEAR DEVICE. "THE FORECAST

MEUE BY DR. R.RAMANNA, DIRECTOR OF THE BHABHA ATOMIC RESEARCH CENTER, TROMBAY, AT A MEETING OF SCIENTISTS IN CALCUTTA A FORT-NIGHT AGO, THAT ANOTHER EXCITING EVENT--THAT MAY THRILL THE NATION MORE THAN THE MAY 18 EXPLOSION--IS IN THE OFFING IS CONSIDERED BY EXPERTS AS A THERMONUCLEAR EXPLOSION." THE STORY ALSO SAID THAT THE THERMONUCLEAR EXPLOSION WHEN IT OCCURS WILL ADVANCE FURTHER THE USES OF ATOMIC ENERGY FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES. ALONG WITH THIS, SCIENTISTS AT THE BHABHA CENTER ARE WORKING ON CONTROLLED FUSION. TROMBAY SCIENTISTS ARE EXPERIMENTING WITH GAS GLASMA, USING LASERS.

2. CONSUL GENERAL BANE AT BOMBAY CHECKED OUT THIS STORY BY PHONE WITH BARC DIRECTOR RAMANNA JUNE 24. RAMANNA CHARACTERIZED PRESS ACCOUNTS ALLEGING INDIA IS WORKING ON A THERMONUCLEAR EXPLOSIVE DEVICE AS "RIDICULOUS." THE PRESS, HE SAID, HAD INCORRECTLY INTERPRETED REMARKS HE HAD MADE IN CALCUTTA RECENTLY AND TAKEN THEM OUT OF CONTEXT. THE FORTHCOMING EVENT TO WHICH HE MADE REFERENCE, HE SAID, WAS THE VARIABLE ENERGY CYCLOTRON WHICH WAS TO BE COMMISSIONED IN CALCUTTA EARLY NEXT YEAR AND NOT A THERMONUCLEAR EXPLOSION AS ALLEGED IN CERTAIN PRESS ACCOUNTS. RAMANNA HAD ALLUDED TO THE CYCLOTRON BECAUSE HE WAS IN CALCUTTA AND IT SEEMED APPROPRIATE TO DO SO.

3. RAMANNA CONFIRMED THAT BARC SCIENTISTS ARE CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN CONTROLLED FUSION, BUT HE CHARACTERIZED WHAT THEY WERE DOING AS "NORMAL." HE CONFIRMED AS WELL THEY WERE DOING PLASMA RESEARCH BUT ON A "LIMITED SCALE." THE PRESS, HE INDICATED, HAD SUGGESTED A GREAT DEAL MORE THAN WAS THE CASE AS REGARDS RESEARCH IN THIS FIELD.

4. WE HAVE TRIED TO TRACK DOWN THE "SOURCE" OF THE UNI STORY IN DELHI BUT HAVE NOTHING SOLID ON THIS. RAMANNA, WE WERE TOLD BY ONE PRESS CONTACT, VISITED DELHI AFTER CALCUTTA BUT DECLINED TO COMMENT TO REPORTERS ON HIS CALCUTTA REMARKS. ANOTHER PRESS CONTACT ASCRIBED THE UNI PIECE TO UNI GENERAL MANAGER AND EDITOR MIRCHANDANI, SAID THE STORY WAS "INSPIRED" TO TEST WORLD REACTION, AND SAID MIRCHANDANI HAD HIS INFORMATION FROM SOLID SOURCES.

5. COMMENT: AS WE REPORTED IN PARA 2 OF REFTTEL C, WE ASSUME THE INDIANS ARE INTERESTED IN DEVELOPING FUSION TECHNOLOGY. BUT
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WE HAVE NO BASIS FOR A JUDGMENT ON WHETHER THEY ARE WORKING ON DEVELOPMENT OF A THERMONUCLEAR DEVICE. NOR AT THIS POINT CAN WE SAY MUCH ABOUT SCOPE AND EXPENSE WHICH MAY BE INVOLVED IN WHATEVER FUSION RESEARCH IS GOING ON AT BARC. WE DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT THE INDIANS ARE CAPABLE OF DEVELOPING A FUSION EXPLOSIVE DEVICE WITHIN THE SHORT TIMEFRAME ALLUDED TO IN THE UNI STORY. DR. RAMANNA IS APPEARING ON ALL-INDIA RADIO TONIGHT AT 2115 0 (LOCAL). HE MAY USE THE OCCASION TO REPEAT PUBLICLY WHAT HE TOLD

BANE. WE WILL SEND YOU A NIACT IMMEDIATE IF THIS SUBJECT IS
DISCUSSED IN ANY WAY.
SCHNEIDER

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